

Reading Connection

Working Together for Learning Success

September 2014

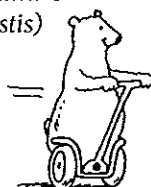
Bennet Academy
Joseph Chella, Principal



Book Picks

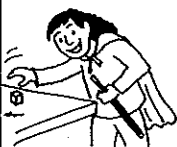
■ *Timmy Failure* (Stephan Pastis)

Timmy's first mistake was letting his mom's Segway get stolen. Now he's trying to get it back by starting his own detective agency. But with a lazy polar bear as his business partner, his chances of success seem slim in this hilarious, cartoon-filled story.



■ *Magic Up Your Sleeve: Amazing Illusions, Tricks, and Science Facts You'll Never Believe* (Helaine Becker)

Readers can amaze friends and relatives with this collection of magic tricks. Balance a cup on the edge of a playing card, lift an ice cube without touching it, and more. Each trick includes an explanation of the science behind the magic.



■ *City of the Beasts* (Isabel Allende)

Alexander Cold doesn't want to stay with his grandmother, and he really doesn't want to accompany her on a quest to find a mythical beast in the Amazon rain forest. Soon the 15-year-old has more to worry about than the mysterious creature they're hunting. (Also available in Spanish.)

■ *Maps and Geography* (Ken Jennings)

Calculate how fast the earth spins, explore time zones, and visit the tallest and the smallest places on the planet. The light tone and the pages filled with activities and amusing quizzes make learning about geography fun. Part of the Junior Genius Guide series.



Moving up: Reading more complex books

When your child steps out of his comfort zone and reads tougher books, he stretches his abilities and grows as a reader. Ease the way with these tips for guiding him toward more challenging materials.

Use picture books

Simple books can help your youngster understand harder ones. If he's frustrated by a history chapter on the American Revolution, for instance, have him read a picture book like *George vs. George* by Rosalyn Schanzer. The illustrations and simpler descriptions will boost his knowledge and make it easier to understand the more complicated explanations in the other book.

Bring in the real world

Use your child's natural curiosity about the world to steer him to more challenging material. For example, he might be fascinated by tsunamis after hearing about one on the news. Suggest



that he find out more about them by reading a nonfiction book or a science magazine aimed at older readers.

Get the facts

Before tackling a difficult novel, it will help if your youngster knows a little about the book's time period or setting. Is he going to read a story that takes place in the Australian outback? He could look up information about the country's customs and geography in a nonfiction library book or online. Building background knowledge will put the story in context so it makes more sense to him. ■

Fun with Words

Spice up spelling practice

These ideas can make spelling practice more fun:

- Write two of your youngster's spelling words correctly and a third incorrectly. Can she spot the misspelled word and fix it? Trade roles, and let her try to stump you.
- Give each letter in the alphabet a random value (A = 1, T = 7, R = 3). Ask your child to spell her words and add up the points to find the "most valuable" one.
- Hold a contest to see who can create the most new words by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter at a time in a word on her list. For instance, drop the *f* from *refuse* to make *reuse*, or change *s* to *g* to get *refuge*. ■



Here's what I think

In school, your youngster will be expected to master "persuasive writing." Have her practice at home by making an argument in writing for something she wants to do.

1. The point. What does she hope to accomplish? She can begin by introducing her case. "Now that I am 10, I think I am old enough to stay up later on school nights."

2. The argument. Suggest that your child write at least three reasons she feels her claim is valid. These "supporting arguments" should clearly state her



reasoning and include relevant information. One might be, "Staying up an extra hour will let me spend more time with my family."

3. The other side. Remind her to consider the opposing side and include ideas to address those concerns. "I will wake up on time by using an alarm clock. If I oversleep, I'll go to bed earlier the next night."

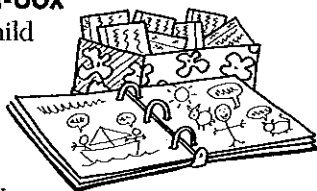
Tip: Use your youngster's paper as a starting point for discussing her request. If you decide not to grant it, you can explain why and set up a time to revisit the issue in the future. ■

Family journaling

Shared journals offer a great way for your family to enjoy writing—and collecting memories—together. Try one of these formats.

Journal-in-a-box

Let your child decorate a small box and label it "The (Your Name) Family Journal." Then, fill the box with "memory cards." Each day, family members can write entries on separate index cards (be sure to put your name and date on each one). *Example:* "I helped make dinner tonight. Our fish tacos were delicious!"



Life illustrated

For this journal, each person adds a daily drawing to a shared notebook. You don't have to be an "artist"—doodles or stick figures are fine. Include captions or speech balloons to tell a story about something that happened that day.

Tip: Keep your journal where everyone can see it (living room coffee table, kitchen desk), and read through it together often. ■

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's reading, writing, and language skills.

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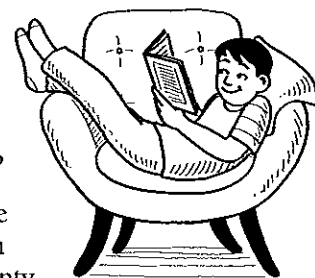
Q&A Read for pleasure

Q My son read a lot over the summer, but now that school has begun, he has less free time. How can he fit reading for pleasure into his busy schedule?

A Your son can still find time to read—it just may take some planning. For starters, suggest that he aim to finish homework and chores early in the evening so he has plenty of time to read before bed.

Then, encourage him to make sure he always has a book with him. That way, he can read during unexpected pockets of time. For instance, he might get in a chapter while he's waiting for a ride home or before his sister's softball game begins.

Finally, turn off or put away electronics (TVs, phones) so he won't be tempted to choose them over books. And don't forget to ask him what ideas he has—readers will always want to find time to read! ■



Parent 2 Parent Participating in conversations

Our daughter Ava has always been shy, and until recently she didn't speak up much during family conversations. What changed things? A picnic!

At a family reunion picnic this summer, my aunt wrote icebreaker questions on each paper plate. Mine said, "What's the first thing you would do if you won the lottery?" Ava's said, "Name something you're proud of." We took turns reading our plates and using the questions

as jumping off points for conversations. Ava got caught up in the discussions—and forgot to notice that she usually doesn't like to join in.

In fact, she liked the idea so much that we've tried it at home. When we set the table, we write questions on slips of paper and tuck them under our plates. Having a topic to discuss is helping Ava feel more comfortable talking—and our family conversations are more interesting, too. ■

